

from the community, all residents moved on to their own stable housing.

The success and value to the community of the first year of this project provided more than ample impetus to expand the program to house up to 14 adults and children for the winter beginning December 1, 2009. The volunteer base expanded to 120 in the first two months of operation the second year. Over 70% of the residents found stable housing before Charter House closed for the season May 1, 2010. Plans are well along to again open Community at Charter House on December 1 of this year with training for new volunteers in November.

Setting up a lunch program followed a similar course. In mid-October 2008, members of several local churches with Father Terry Gleason of St. Stephens as the lead clergy, began to plan the lunch program which drew heavily on the Friday night Community Suppers started by the Congregational Church in 2004. The Community Lunch program began Christmas week, 2008.

A coordinated effort by area churches, service organizations,


businesses, and citizens help to make these programs work. For a typical Community Lunch about 45 meals are served. Bag lunches are also provided to two area food shelves. On a typical Friday night, the Community Suppers now serve over 200 meals, including carry-outs.

The success of both of these programs is made possible by broad participation of churches in the Middlebury area. Over 600 members of the community now donate over 17,000 hours each year to support the transitional housing program or the supper and lunch programs. This spirit of cooperation and commitment has been exhilarating for everyone who has been part of it. This has opened a lot of eyes to what is possible when the spirit takes over. MCCC was fortunate to receive a substantial grant from the Walter Cerf Community Fund of the Vermont Community Foundation in 2009 and, in 2010, became a United Way Community Partner.

by Doug Sinclair,
Member, Congregational Church of
Middlebury and President, Middlebury
Community Care Coalition (MCCC)

Electronic Giving Now Available!

The Vermont Conference has entered the 21st Century! We are now accepting donations electronically. You can donate on-line, or download a form which you can fill out and email, fax, or postal mail to the Conference office. Contributions can be by credit or debit card, or direct withdrawal from your checking account.

It is also possible to become a "sustaining member" of the Vermont Conference, as you can easily arrange to make regular monthly donations rather than a one time gift. Your contribution can be directed to Friends of the Vermont Conference, Our Church's Wider Mission, or any special use you wish to designate. It's all very cool. Why don't you, ummm, give it a try? Simply go to the Conference website at www.vtcucc.org and click on the  button. If you'd rather fill out the form, contact the Conference Office for a copy or follow the link to it under Quick Links/ Documents/E-Giving Payment Authorization Form on the website.

Our electronic giving program is coordinated by Vanco Services, in conjunction with the UCC. If you'd like more information about how to consider electronic giving for your congregation, please contact Jim Thomas at thomasj@vtcucc.org.



Emergency Housing and Food Initiatives in Middlebury

In the spring of 2008, the Addison County Housing Coalition, which is made up of all the public/private/non-profit organizations concerned with housing and food issues, realized the existing capacity in the County of emergency housing and food would be insufficient to cope the economic downturn. During summer and early fall meetings, the Middlebury Clergy Group agreed to spearhead initiatives to provide emergency housing and food, deciding to utilize volunteers and church facilities as much as possible to minimize cost.

On the housing side, the Group explored a model similar to the Interfaith Hospitality Networks that serve homeless families in larger U.S. cities. The Group hoped to find a suitable location that could be staffed 24/7 with volunteers. Rev. Steve Jewett, pastor of Memorial Baptist Church, was the lead clergy for this project. Charter House, a building owned by the Congregational Church of Middlebury, was identified as the best location. Because the back portion of the building was vacant and included a kitchen, dining area, and suitable living quarters for up to five families. The Congregational Church Council and Trustees quickly approved the use of Charter House for emergency housing. The project came to be known as Community at Charter House.

The Congregational Church already had several years experience with



A Day at Community Lunches

transitional housing and had set up a non-profit, the Middlebury Community Care Coalition, Inc. (MCCC), to operate a 5-apartment building a block from the Church. Early on the decision was made that MCCC should serve as the fiscal/legal umbrella for the program. Drawing on an inventory of donated apartment furnishings maintained by MCCC for use in transitional/emergency housing and by residents ready to move on to their own stable housing and additional donations from the ecumenical community, volunteers turned Charter House into an emergency housing facility opening to its first residents on January 6, 2008. It is staffed 24/7 by over 85 volunteers from the community (with most coming from area churches and Middlebury College). All volunteers received 3 hours of training before joining the staff. Charter House closed for the season May 1, 2009. With support

Amy, You're Not in Vermont Anymore!



Amy Maguire, granddaughter of Mary and Joseph Hall, long-time members of Second Congregational Church, UCC in Bennington, and a 2009 University of Vermont graduate, has just begun her second year as a 2nd grade teacher in Savoonga on St. Lawrence Island in Alaska. She has ten students in her class, which is one of two 2nd grade classes. Her first year was a learning experience, as it is for all teachers just beginning. She feels this will be a good year and is already enjoying it.

Savoonga, is one of two communities on the island which is located in the Bering Sea and is populated by about 700 Siberian Yupik Eskimos. The island is 160 miles from Nome, Alaska and 50 miles from Russia. All supplies and mail are flown in on daily flights (weather permitting), or shipped on barges that arrive a few times a year. As a subsistence community, the diet consists mainly of seal, walrus, whale and fish, among other local resources and is supplemented with store bought, processed foods.

During Amy's first year, as a mission project, the 2nd Congregational Church was able to assist her class with backpacks of school supplies, teddy bears and t-shirts with the slogan: "Someone in Bennington, VT Loves You." Children from the Church also corresponded with Amy's class.

Recently, Amy was sitting at her kitchen table watching fishermen in a boat coming in from the sea with their halibut catch. They sped up towards the beach and pulled the motor up at the last moment so as to glide onto the beach. They then pulled the boat the rest of the way onto the land with an ATV. It was 10:00 PM and still daylight. Life in Savoonga is quite different from college life in Burlington, Vermont!



--adapted with permission from the 2nd Congregational Church, UCC, Bennington Newsletter, *The Open Door*, October 2010

2030 Clergy Network Conference

2030

CLERGY NETWORK
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

You can barely open your email inbox these days without

being barraged with claims that the mainline Protestant churches are dying – both at the congregational and wider-church levels. People love to tell us that our entire historical stream of Christianity is dying out, and not even very slowly. The United Church of Christ is closing an average of three churches every week; and in that same time, we're only starting 0.7 new congregations.

I am out of patience with this conversation. I am tired of bemoaning the decline of mainline Protestantism. I am tired of being told that the Church is becoming increasingly irrelevant. I am tired of going to meeting after meeting, conference after conference, to be told that in ten years, twenty years, forty years, the Church as we know it won't exist. Because I know that's not true.

This past June, I spent three days in Chicago at the 2030 Clergy Network's first-ever independently organized conference. The Network's mission is to bring together UCC clergy in their 20s and 30s in order to facilitate community and advocacy for the younger clergy in the denomination. I am on the planning team, and for the past year, my fellow team members and I put a tremendous amount of energy and effort into planning our time together: inviting speakers, recruiting workshop leaders, raising money, and doing publicity – all with absolutely no budget. Our previous two events have been a single day tacked on to the beginning of General Synod, and each

event had around forty people in attendance. We thought we'd really stretch ourselves, really work hard, and aim to have seventy-five younger clergy attend this conference. Could we do it? We don't know how many clergy in their 20s and 30s there are in the UCC. Are there even seventy-five of us out there? How do we find them? When we don't know who they are, could we get them to show up? **Seventy-five young clergy was our goal: we got ninety.**

Right before the conference happened, someone in the national office sent us the names of all the 2030 clergy with Ministerial Profiles. Turns out, according to this list, the ninety people attending our conference were one-quarter of the 2030 clergy in the United Church of Christ.

You can't tell us that there won't be a United Church of Christ in the next ten, or twenty, or forty years. There is hope for the future of the Church – and for the present. We are doing great things, and God is doing great things with us, *right now.*

I'm not convinced that the UCC is really dying. I am thrilled to be able to counter our weekly net loss of 2.3 churches with the presence and power of 25% of the UCC's younger clergy all in one place together. I am certain that the Holy Spirit is still moving among the people and churches of the United Church of Christ, because I have witnessed it again and again. And if we 2030 Clergy have anything to say about it, the work of the Spirit in the UCC is going to continue! Thanks be to God!

--by Rev. Mary Nelson Abbott, Pastor,
Malletts Bay Congregational Church,
Colchester

Vermont News

VERMONT CONFERENCE, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
36 North Main Street, Randolph VT 05060

Phone: 802-728-4999 • Fax: 802-728-4072 • www.vtcucc.org

Rev. Dr. Lynn Bujnak, *Conference Minister*
Rev. Pam Lucas, *Associate Conference Minister*
Jim Thomas, *Business Manager/Stewardship Consultant*
Lynn Thomas, *Administrative Assistant/Search and Call Secretary*
Sybil McShane, *Communications and Resource Coordinator*

Vermont News is published four times a year through your support of Our Church's Wider Mission. We welcome articles and pictures from local churches and associations. Send them to: information@vtucc.org.